

# Flying Snake

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*In This Issue:* Butterfly Phobia • Chinese Communism and Cryptids • Fortean Foxes • British Ball Lightning • Kazakhstan Flying Lizard • Steller's Sea Cow • Archive China and Hong Kong Cryptozoology • And More!

## ABOUT FLYING SNAKE

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## CREDITS

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*“For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames.” Christopher Smart , ‘Rejoice in the Lamb’. Poet,naturalist,lunatic (1722-1771)*

For a long time this Truth has been suppressed,but now it can be revealed to every man, woman and mutant on the face of this planet - issue 3 of Flying Snake has arrived on your doorstep (with apologies to Devo`s General Boy for that quote) or inbox if you`re one of those select few (er,select one actually, Mike in Australia) who receive it by e-mail.

Talking of electronic media and such like, Flying Snake will soon be available on Kindle if I get my act together, I thank Vikki Barlow my manager at Oxfam, Macclesfield for telling me about this possibility. I am quite excited about this,being aware that finances plus benefits help the chances of not starving to death and keeping a roof over my head and the opportunity of doing more crypto research. Which brings me on to the developments since Flying Snake 2 was published last October. I was hoping to bring you an account of an eye witness observation of the Loch Ness Monster from the early 1970s, but because I went on about it to the person who saw it like the crazy loon I sometimes am, (as in lunatic, not the bird of that species) a bit to much, she changed her mind. But as I barely believe in Nessie and this is a magazine about obscurer cryptozoology,perhaps it`s for the best?

I have tried to include the subjects mentioned in the back of FS2 in this number and it is more Fortean than usual,including an appearance of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus on the roof of a caravan. I love the way this subverts the usual expected locations, e.g roof of a grandiose cathedral or monastery.

I would appreciate your feedback, now that Flying Snake is one year old with this issue and I`m sorry it`s late. I hope to include telling the time from cat`s eyes, the tragic story of Ota Benga, the man caged in a zoo and part two of Carl`s Giant Snakes essay in Flying Snake 4. Enjoy!



# ***Fortean Foxes***

***Richard Muirhead***

By “Fortean Foxes” I mean foxes seen in Britain of odd coloration size, or behaviour. Or any other Fortean aspects. I have on record a blue fox from about the 1870s or '80s. This story is from a book about hunting in Co. Durham, Britain:

“Foxes vary in colour very much, and we killed a blue one in the West country one season about this time, [November-R] after finding him at Mainsforth whin.” (1)

According to Karl Shuker: “The blue fox is bred for its fur so perhaps there were fur farms there at that time?” (2)

Arctic foxes occasionally turn up in Britain. The one on the front cover was killed in Nuneaton, Warwickshire. The photo was kindly provided to me by Warwickshire cryptozoologist Carl Marshall who said that it was killed by a dog (probably a Jack Russell terrier) in the late 1970's.

In April 1983 an Arctic Fox (*Alopex Lagopus*) turned up in Dorset:

“A strange light-coloured fox was seen alive on the farm of Mr J. Strange at Worth Matravers (SY / 9776) near Poole, Dorset on a few occasions between about 4th and 15th April 1983. On 16th April the animal was found recently dead in a field one kilometre away from the nearest road. The body was given to one of us for identification and autopsy to ascertain the cause of death... Two colour phases exist; one of which turns completely white in winter. This particular animal was pale fawn and grey in colour with dark tips to some guard hairs and the face was very dark grey. The pelage has long guard hairs with dense underfur. The large paws have much fur between the pads. The ears are noticeably small and rounded. The appearance is of a small and very long haired, light-coloured fox with relatively smaller ears, shorter muzzle and shorter legs than the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).



Apart from the ears some of this appears to be an illusion due to the long hair as in this particular animal, relative to head and body length, the dimensions were not greatly different to that of the Red Fox... However there is always the possibility of it being a hybrid. *A. lagopus* is adapted to arctic conditions... Obviously the animal has arrived from the arctic under its own power suggesting escape from a fur farm or zoological park. It had managed to survive successfully and feed for at least 10 days as shown by sightings and the faeces in the rectum. It was not thin and there was a considerable amount of fat in the omentum. It would be interesting to know from where the fox escaped or was released and so the distance travelled and the length of time it was able to survive at liberty”. (3)

The April 2010 issue of Fortean Times contained the story of a platinum fox seen on Dartmoor. Karl Shuker wrote:

“On the evening of 13 March 2010 , Shaun Histed-Todd was driving a bus along a Dartmoor road when he saw a most unusual creature run down the edge of the moor and stand by the roadside , where the buses headlights afforded him an excellent view of it for half a minute before it ran back up onto the moors... Shaun contacted me a few days later, as he was unable to identify it, and provided me with a detailed description. It resembled a young fox and had a bushy white-tipped tail but its coat was dark-silvery-grey; it had noticeably large ears, white paws and a black raccoon-like facial mask. Reading this, I was startled to realise that Shaun`s description was an exact verbal portrait of a most unusual yet highly distinctive animal - a young platinum fox. After checking photos of platinum foxes online, Shaun confirmed that this is indeed what he had seen...” (4)

Certain individuals with, in Fort`s words ,“ wild talents” seem to be able to “fascinate” foxes. The late William Corliss recorded an instance from India in his `Incredible Life: A Handbook of Biological Mysteries` (p.265). Citing English Mechanic 62: 269-70 1895.

“A man began a muffled, chuckling kind of call, which he kept up without ceasing. In about two minutes a fox came out of a little ravine close by, and, looking suspiciously about him, trotted towards the noise.”



The article goes on to say how eventually 30-40 foxes gathered. ( “The instant the man stopped his chant, every one of the animals fled, as if the spell was broken.”) (5)

More obviously Fortean behaviour includes:

“T.A. Shellswell wrote to *Reville* (20 Feb 1976) that a fox being chased by a local hunt once sought sanctuary in a neglected corner of his garden, later escaping safely. Every year since , wild fox-gloves have grown there, where nothing grew before.” (6)

“Also from *Reville* (9 June 1978) we learned of a young fox who lost his way in Thame, Oxfordshire, and took refuge in the cellar of a pub called The Fox.” (7)

“G.F. Tomlinson wrote to the Sunday Express ( 28 Aug 1981) that he was playing golf with a friend when they noticed a fox basking in the sunshine. His friend played a shot which landed near the animal, and it grabbed the ball and made off with it. Mr Tomlinson gave chase, and the fox dropped the ball. When examined , the ball had R. Fox and Sons” written on it, with a red fox logo.”(8)

In July 2002 the Manchester Evening News Media web site reported on an attack by a five legged fox on a man in the Audenshaw area:

### **DAD KILLS FOX WITH FIVE LEGS**

“Dad Jason Lloyd killed a FIVE-legged fox after it attacked him in his kitchen.

Jason was cooking sausages when it crept up behind him. He said “ I’d opened the back door to let some air in when suddenly this fox pounced. “It tried to attack me, but I managed to push it away. Then it ran into the garden and my Jack Russell, Pip, started fighting with it.

I thought it was going to kill the dog, and I was worried because my little boy Jack was in was in the house.....I hit the fox with a yard brush and when I looked it was dead. But then I got the shock of my life when I realised it had five legs.....Recently a fox attacked a young child in a house in the south of England.” (9)

Perhaps this fox turned aggressive through the trauma of having five legs? I mean, wouldn’t you?



Philip Gosse mentions a case of fox fascination in *The Romance of Natural History*. Second Series 1861

“Mr J. H. Gurney reports the account of a respectable gamekeepers , who, being much annoyed by the nightly visits of a fox to the poultry, could not imagine how Reynard managed to effect his purpose, as they roosted on a large spreading oak. One morning, however, just as day was dawning, he heard a great noise among the poultry, and, looking out of the window, saw a fox running round and round under the place where they sat, and soon observed the fowls began to fall from the tree in great confusion. The fox immediately seized his victim, and the mystery was so far solved. A day or two afterwards the fox , a very large male, was killed in an adjoining paddock, and no further assaults were made upon the poultry.” (10)

On May 31st 2010 the BBC Nature U.K. Web site posted:

“Over 20 years ago I was tipped off about an incredibly rare black fox in southern England and was lucky enough to film it. I have not seen one since...

The Springwatch team have been searching all over the country to see if any are alive today, and hopefully to film one, but unfortunately the trail has gone cold. Although I've heard rumours of sightings here and there, I'm intrigued to know whether or not there are any living examples of these near mythical beasts. And I really need your help.

If you have ANY information about a black fox, please, please let us know by commenting below. There was a confirmed sighting in Lancashire some time ago, but nothing recently as far as we know.” (11)

Another oddity, this time from the [www.husky-owners.com](http://www.husky-owners.com) Forum dated February 4th 2012, a posting by Ron Tao+Sky in Dover, Kent

“The strange thing that is puzzling me is the amount of dead foxes that are on the roads near me. Its not just the odd one but 3 or 4 together as though they have been dumped there. Now it's happening with the Badgers.” (12) Some time in 1995 the late Jan Williams, whilst editor of *SCAN* (through whom Jon and I “rediscovered” each other after our time together in Hong





Kong) wrote to me about white foxes and other things:

“A pure white fox was killed in 1887 by Taunton Vale Hounds in West Somerset.” This is in *Man and Beast* by Ron Freethy. (13)

In *Country Sportsman* 1949 (page number unknown) there is a story: ‘Albino Foxes In Northumberland A Strain That Persists Around Rothbury’

“In the year 1937 a white fox was killed in the grounds of Brinkburn Priory almost within sight of the River Coquet by the Percy Hounds. The mask is now believed to be at Alnwick Castle, the property of the Duke of Northumberland. In the spring of the same year, Richardson, a keeper on the Cragside Estate further west along the Coquet Valley, dug out a white vixen which had two cubs of normal colour. On Tuesday, 15th 1938, the Morpeth Foxhounds, whilst hunting in the east part of their country, roused and quickly killed a pure-white fox. The mask, beautifully mounted, is now at Meldon Hall. The tips of the ears and brush are black, the eyes yellowish and lighter than the eyes of a normal fox, and there is none of the pink colouration one associates with the true albino.... Later in the season another white fox was reported as being seen by the rabbit catcher at Paxton Dene, but no further trace of it was found. This outcrop of albinism naturally caused a good deal of local interest and there were many wild and fantastic theories as to the cause of this phenomenon. One of the most popular was that these white foxes had all been fathered by a silver dog fox which, by a strange coincidence, had escaped early in the spring of 1937 from a silver-fox farm in the neighbourhood of Capheaton, not very far, as a fox will travel, from the Coquet banks.... In 1947 the keeper at Linden Hall, which lies about a mile north of Paxton Dene, reported having seen a white fox in the Dene”.

“This man’s evidence can be taken as reliable.... The seed of this white breed, I feel sure, originated somewhere amongst the rocky, rhododendron-grown hills above Rothbury and, from time to time, it keeps cropping up as it is handed down from father to son.”(14)



Jumping forwards 40 years to The Mail on Sunday August 30<sup>th</sup> 1987, 'Lair of the little white foxes' by Dr Brendan Quayle, which told of with two white cubs, one of which was shot the other "booted to death"(15)." "According to David Bellamy\* the birth of an albino or white-skinned specimen of a wild or even domesticated creature, unless specially bred, is very rare." (16) One fox was shot. The story continued concerning the killing of the other fox: "...It was two teenage sons of a local farmers who killed the other white cub and one of its red brothers from the same litter. "Why did you do it?" I asked them bitterly this week. "Foxes are vermin and we were worried they were going for our geese," they told me." (17) Quayle speculated their white pelts would end up at a taxidermist.

[\* I wrote to David Bellamy about this story but received no reply. The above incident was in the Border country between England and Scotland. Perhaps the same location as in the Country Sportsman article?]

According to Roger Burrows in A Complete Study of The Red Fox (1988) :

"There are records of white, presumably albino, foxes from Dartmoor, and at least five records of them from Whaddon Chase."... "Russian authors mention blue and silver foxes as being present in the northern (part?) of the red foxes` range, so not all the blue foxes in northern Europe need necessarily be descended from the feral North American form." (18)

The Wild About Britain Forum on the Net reported an eyewitness sighting of a white fox near the Wirral. This was on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006. 'Lemming' thought it was a dog but later: ".This morning I saw it streaking across the field in front of my house, grabbed my binoculars and saw it was a white fox. White from head to hind legs then it turned a peachy colour. How lovely!!! Just wanted to share my sightings with you all." (19)

On the same Forum in September 2007 there were some interesting communications about black and other coloured foxes.



On September 22<sup>nd</sup> John (in Coventry) said: “I have just had a shock. I was looking out of my bedroom window and a scrawny looking Black Fox walked past my Bungalow...I have never seen a Black Fox before and must admit that I didn’t know they could be that colour. It wasn’t a full on black but dark enough to be able to pass for black.”(20) C C replied giving instances of a black one in

Maesycmmer near Caerphilly and one on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2007 “on the fields by Carmarthen Bay”with “a black stripe down back, with a stripe running down shoulder blades.” (21) C C saw three silver foxes in the past four years in Carmarthen.

Finally, on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 a newspaper website reported the sighting of a black fox on the outskirts of Chorley, Lancashire: Mr Hehir, from Preston, Lancashire, was walking in a cemetery with a friend when he spotted the animal among the gravestones.....Country villagers traditionally told stories of how the fox was as “black as night, so that it could live in a man’s shadow and never be seen.” (22)

The Spring of 2012 saw reports of much larger than normal foxes turning up in Britain. On March 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 The Sunday Times reported, with photographs, that “ Foxes nearly three times the average size have been shot by riflemen, re-igniting the debate about the threat they may pose to pets and humans. Two giant foxes killed in recent weeks, one in Aberdeenshire, have weighed in at more than 30lb, breaking the 26lb record set by a specimen trapped in Kent at the end of 2010...In northwest London...One mother described seeing a fox fleeing a neighbour’s garden with a cat in its jaws...Jonathan Reynolds, senior research scientist at the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, said: A 35lb fox would have been unthinkable a few years ago. We don’t know why they’re getting bigger, but one possible explanation is that they are getting better fed in urban areas.” (23) Carl Marshall saw a very large fox in Warwickshire in the early Spring of 2012. At the time of writing he was going to take hair samples to show Jon Downes in Devon.



Huge British foxes may actually not be something new after all. The Country Man of Winter 1957 reported how some hunts-men spied “a gigantic grey wolf-like creature loping across the fields” in Sussex. The witnesses thought it was a werewolf or the ghost of some giant animal killed long before.



*Fig 1* A rather dog-like (to my mind) fox in a pub in Nomansland, on the Wiltshire-Dorset border. I photographed it c. early 1990s

This account brought a reply a few issues later “from a Doris W. Metcalf, of that county, who had also seen large grey wolf-like animals in the area before WW2, but accepted them as a surviving remnant of some ancient wolf-fox cross breeding that once stalked the downs and ancient forest of Anderida where Pevensey now sits. She writes: “I always understood they were the last of an ancient line of hill foxes, though I have found them on the marshes too. I first saw one of these huge grey foxes on a summer afternoon near Jevington. My companion and I thought it was a large Alsatian dog as it crossed



the track, taking not the slightest notice of us...Another time, when the hounds were in the wooded grounds of Glenleigh Manor, one of these huge creatures suddenly appeared walking along the drive a yard or two in front of us.” (24)

## **KNIGHTWICK: WHAT’S HALF-FOX, HALF WILD-BOAR?**

### **CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH A MYSTERY**

“A mystery animal- half fox cub, half wild boar - is at large in the Worcestershire countryside. The creature calmly walked out in front of a car on Monday afternoon, startling its occupants , Jo Morris, from Suckley, near Worcester, and her mother, Rachel.

At 4pm , they were halfway up Ankerdine Hill at Knightwick, when the animal appeared. “ It was a cross between a wild boar and a fox cub”, said Jo, an equestrian trainer. “ I have lived in the countryside for 30 years and have never seen anything like it, wild or tame. It was the size of a half-grown fox cub with a long Roman nose almost like a wild boar’s , smallish ears and its skin was brown and mottled. “ It had a hunched back and I likened it to a hyena as it had a smaller front than back. It had a long thin tail, which ruled it out as being a fox cub, which develops quite a brush early on. “...After some research the mother and daughter dismissed the idea that the animal could have been a coypu, which is native to South America, although groups of them live in areas of Norfolk. They escaped from zoos and now breed successfully in the Fens”. (25)

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## TWO TYPES OF HEDGEHOG



An image from an old natural history book showing a hedgehog without bristles and one with them.





# ***Archive China and Hong Kong Cryptozoology***

***Richard Muirhead***

## **ODD BIRD**

The Straits Times in July 1887 reported a story of an odd bird in China:

“The *Hupao* says that on the 15th ult , some persons from Peking brought an unheard of animal to Canton, which has a red head resembling a turkey , with green feathers, and its body is like that of a goat, with black wool. It has no tongue, and its food consists of bananas, which it swallows without chewing. This strange creature is exhibited at the yamen of the Provincial Judge (at Canton,) and ten cash are charged to see it.” (1)

There is another story of an strange bird in Kwangtung (Guangdong) from 1893, this time a bird with a “ head of a human being”:

## **ANOTHER STRANGE BIRD**

“A Man hailing from Nanhai district in Kwangtung states that an uncommon looking bird was captured there in the country last winter. The bird stands 3 feet high from the ground, and has the head of a human being, whilst its body is covered with hair several inches in length. On its appearance the country people were much alarmed and a large crowd set out to exterminate the uncommon animal, for fear it should be a dangerous customer to harbour. The person who managed to save it from the mob and had the courage to capture it has made a good thing out of it. In addition to its strange appearance the bird is said to be “ a most modest creature” , avoiding the gaze of curious people, as







*Fig 1* China's Bird with a "Human Head" Mike Hardcastle

if it were too bashful to let people see it, and it is only at the command of its master that it will show itself." (2)

I can only guess (and it is a pure guess) that this was a juvenile ostrich, (because an ostrich has a very vaguely (to me) human looking head.)



Perhaps this was an ostrich which had somehow found its way ashore in Kwangtung province after one of the “treasure ships” of Admiral Zheng He had been ship wrecked on a voyage back from the east coast of Africa in the early 1420s or before ? However Mike has chosen it to look more raptor-like, (see previous page.)

Or may be it was an escaped pet or zoo exhibit.? According to Menzies:

“ The treasure ships returned to China with all manner of exotic items: ` dragon saliva [ambergis],incense and golden amber` and `lions, gold spotted leopards and camel-birds [ostriches] which are six or seven feet tall` from Africa; gold cloth from Calicut in south-west India, studded with pearls and precious stones;elephants,parrots,sandalwood,peacocks, hardwood,incense,tin and cardamom from Siam ( modern Thailand)”.(3)

*Fig 2 A Chinese spider with a human-like face. February 1935.*

Mike Hardcastle.



The story of this freak spider is on the following page.



## **SPIDER WITH A HUMAN FACE**

A spider with a human face has been discovered in Chumatien, Honan (China.)

Its body is small, but its head is abnormally large.

The face of the spider is dead white with black eye-brows and a black nose. White lips add to the horrors of its appearance. Its feet are dark brown.

A Chinese found the creature in his home and he has sent it to the People's Education Institution (4)

## **CHINA'S MONSTER**

### **Loch Ness in the Shade**

#### **Gigantic Python?**

Kwangtung Province in China has now produced the "Loch Ness" monster, for according to reports received here, says a Canton report from Toy-Shan, a hilly district of the province, 42 villagers have been killed recently by a huge serpent which has terrorized the population of that district for some time past. The serpent was finally shot dead by a man more intrepid than the rest and this individual has now received a large reward from the local Magistrate. There are various conjectures afloat locally about the nature of this death-dealing monster, which some believe to have been a giant python of a type occasionally found in remoter districts. (5)



## **STRANGE ANIMAL AT CANTON ZOO**

A unique creature is on exhibition in the Canton Municipal Zoo. It has just been brought here from the mountains of the Taishan district. It has the head of a cat, the body of a horse and weighs more than 100lb, says a Canton report. It is attracting considerable interest. (6)

## **MAN KILLED BY SHARK AT HONG KONG**

**From Reg Harris    Hong Kong**

Police-sergeant H.W Jackson was the victim yesterday of the first known attack at Hong Kong while he was bathing at Tweed Beach shortly before dusk. He was frightfully mauled and died within a minute of being rescued by Captain A.W Braude, of the Hong Kong Telephone Company. Tweed Beach is a popular swimming area near Stanley internment camp. Sergeant Jackson, who was awaiting repatriation to London. Large sharks have been seen in Hong Kong bathing waters. It is believed that this one must have followed a ship in.(7)

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## ***Communist China, the "Gang of Four" and a "strange animal with horns that was not an ox."***

Those of you who know me well will be familiar with my many declarations of sanity on my Muirhead's Mysteries blog on Cryptozoology Online when I introduce obscure off-beat cryptozoology discoveries. As in long lost archive material I mean. This offering I am about to comment upon is somewhat different (but only a bit!) It dates from a Foreign Broadcast Information Service( FBIS) monitoring report which I discovered online in early March 2012; dated January 18th 1978 when I was a mere child of 11.

What interests me in this case is the combination of mystery animal speculation within Chinese Communist intrigue and the custom of Chinese Communists to use the animal kingdom, both natural and bizarre, in their perpetual struggles. The "Quakers" should not be confused with the Christian international movement which began in England in the mid Seventeenth Century. (1) Nor should the "Gang of Four" be confused with the punk band of that name, who formed in 1977 and released their first single "Damaged Goods" in 1978, but:

"Four leading radical figures[who] played a dominant political role during the later years of the Cultural Revolution. Hardliners Jiang Qing (Mao Zedong's fourth wife), Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen appeared likely to seize power. But several weeks after Mao's death in September 1976, they were instead arrested and blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Sentences for their "anti-party"" deeds ranged from death (later commuted to life in prison) to 20 years in prison " (2)

The FBIS report said: **NATIONAL AFFAIRS. LIBERATION ARMY DAILY DISCUSSES 'QUAKERS' AMONG GANG OF FOUR.**





*Fig 1* A propaganda poster showing the Gang of Four. The woman (centre left) is Mao's last wife, Jiang Qing. The caption reads- "Decisively Throw Out the Wang-Zhang-Jiang-Yao Anti Party Clique!" Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Peking, 17 Jan - - An old scientist humorously declared : "The 'gang of four' bred a strange animal with horns that was not an ox, for the animal has bristles which the ox does not have; however, it was not a porcupine because a porcupine has no horns." This was well put. Among the "gang of four's." sworn followers, confidants and lackeys, those strange creatures were quite dashing and exciting. Obsessed by their lust for power, they acted as if they were crazy drunk. Their harm was in causing "quakes", so we might as well call them "quakers". As a result of the "gang of four's" instigation and commands or as a result of their counter revolutionary ultra rightist



revisionist line, “political quakes” have continually occurred beneath our feet during the past few years. The sinister military adviser Chang Chun-chiao blared :” We should send those persons with horns on their heads and bristles on their bodies to the central authorities to kick up a row there.” (3)

And so it goes on in a similar vein. Deng Xiao-ping is famous for saying, in 1962 “ It doesn’t matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mice” in other words it doesn’t matter how China becomes prosperous, through communism or capitalism, as long as it does. So China is no stranger to combining animal mysteries with significant political events.

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`Quakers` Among Gang of Four.





# ***A Living Mammoth in Mississippi, 1818***

**LITERATURE,  
ARTS, SCIENCES, &c.**

## **THE LIVING MAMMOTH.**

**FROM THE EMIGRANT**

***Prairie Du Chien, March 1, 1818.***

Sir—The present appears to be an age fruitful in curiosities, on the land as well as in the deep. I take the liberty to send you for publication a copy of a letter to Dr. Mitchell, written by a gentleman of New York, who has been for some time past, a sojourner in the wilds of upper Mississippi. The strange account which he there gives of the re-appearance of the mammoth, and the causes of so great commotions among the wild animals—will afford to the naturalist matter of deep speculation, and excite in the public generally equal curiosity with the recent appearance of the great serpent on the shores of the Atlantic.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant, &c.

—  
©NewsBank/American  
Antiquarian Soc. 2004

The above report was published in The Weekly Recorder (Ohio) April 17<sup>th</sup> 1818. Dale Drinnon told me in an e-mail that Ivan Sanderson wrote about surviving mastodons in the Eastern US area in the 1700s in Dynasty of Abu, but most people think that





source to be untrustworthy. In President Jefferson's time, some hope was held out that some of the the Pleistocene megafauna survived Out West" but that "Out west" kept going further West as the settlers pushed on until the possibility was no longer regarded possible. There was some ambiguous Native folklore that was collected on the theory, though: but nothing as substantial as any report or rumour of wild Elephants in Mississippi or anywhere else in the Eastern US in the 1800s. As far as my research goes to indicate anyway.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1818 the National Aegis (Massachusetts) carried a letter from a Dr Samuel Mitchell who proclaimed: "Do not be too much surprised at a mention of a quadruped so famed for its size, and which has long since been considered as extinct....Various Indian accounts have lately reached us of its having been seen on the Big Prairie , not far from the head of the Redwood River. "A now defunct web site that commented on controversial author Gavin Menzies proposition that the Chinese sailed around the world after 1421 and took animals from one country to a another[<http://www.gavinmenzies.net/assets/images/spacer.gif>] stated that the Chinese may have brought elephants to the Mississippi and Missouri areas. Also, " Mr Stanley was captured and taken by elephant over mountains west of Missouri. "

Furthermore: " Hippopotamus from Africa to China ( Beijing Museum - `Western Han c. 208 BC`) Rhinoceros. African Bronze rhinoceros sculpted in western Han period. There is a saddle tied around this rhino. There is also a Mo=Tapir. This bronze sculpture unearthed in the Royal tombs of Han Guo of China of the Warring States era is skillfully designed, lively, complex technical achievement according to the experts. There is a Chinese lady sitting on its back carrying a pole attached to a round dish on top. This art is held in Shen Xi province museum. If China did not have tapirs just as it does not have rhinos, Zhou Chinese must have sailed to continents afar to fetch these animals, just like the giraffes delighting the Ming Royal courts."

" There is also a legend popular in Oregon historical circles that a rhino was found on a Pacific beach (USA) , that was being transported back to China but was there due to a shipwreck."



# ***A Dog-Headed Sea Monster off Boneventura, South America, June 1721***

I found this story on a Newsbank database of American newspapers—namely The Boston News-Letter, dated Monday June 26 to Thursday June 29th 1721. Bonaventura is probably the main sea port of Colombia.

Paris April 7 [1721]. The Publick here has been entertain'd with the following Strange Account of a Sea Monster, which was seen on the 18th August 1720 in the Gulph of South America call'd Boneventura. That Monster had a Head like a Water Spaniel with an indifferent wide Mouth, broad flat Teeth, fiery Eyes like those of an enrag'd Person, lank Hair, a large flat Nose, Hands, Arms, Shoulders, and all Motions like those of a Man, a brown Skin, full Breasts, like those of a Nurse. In what distinguishes the 2 Sexes resembling a Horse, as near as could be guessed by the Eye he was about 8 Foot high. He was from 10 in the forenoon till 12 within Arms length of a French Ship. The Captain order'd his Men to endeavour to strike him with a harping Iron but he escap'd twice by diving under water, however some time after he came up again, snatch'd a Line out of the Hand of one of the beholders, and moved off Swimming as a Man; then drew near to the Ship again, and raising himself so high above Water that his Knees were seen, so far forgot the Respect due to his Tarpaulian Spectators as to do, what, for Decencies sake, the Author of the Relation has thought fit to leave unexpressed and then disappear'd quite. The Duke Regent desiring to be satisfied of the Truth of this Story, sent for the Captain and Mate of the Ship, who assur'd him that the Description afore said is entirely conformable to Truth, whereupon His Royal Highness has ordered a Draught of that Monster, to be deposited among the Historical Records of Paris and with a full Account of all the foremention'd Circumstances. This Monster seems to resemble one which was kill'd in 1717 on the Shelves of Boulogne, by Mr Caron.



***A VISION OF THE VIRGIN MARY  
AND CHILD ON THE ROOF  
OF A CARAVAN, ISLE OF WIGHT,  
EARLY 1980s***



*Fig 1* This image appeared on the roof of a caravan of some hermits on the Isle of Wight in the early 1980s.

My mother and I knew two hermits who lived in a caravan or portacabin-type structure near Wolverton Manor, the Isle of Wight for a while in the 1980s. They passed on a piece of paper with the above image on it which appeared on the roof of the caravan, although I never saw it myself and I do not know any other circumstances. However, the



notelet had the following paragraph on it:

“ Just another portrait of Mary? Not quite- This one appeared and stayed for two months on the ceiling of an island hermitage soon after it was established. As it began to fade a need to draw it was felt so as to preserve the image and that the blessing might be shared...”



*Fig 2 Google Earth image of Wolverson Manor, Isle of Wight*



# ***NATASHA: THE MONKEY THAT WALKED UPRIGHT***

***ZVI RON***

The most famous resident of the Safari Park in Ramat Gan, Israel, is Natasha, a black macaque monkey. News reports quickly spread around the world when she began walking exclusively on her hind legs, with a "ramrod straight" posture like a human. Monkeys generally alternate between walking on all fours and upright movement, but Natasha only walked on two legs.

This unusual behavior began after she nearly died from a stomach ailment. Four monkeys at the zoo were stricken with severe stomach flu. They were treated at the zoo clinic by veterinarian Yigal Horowitz. "I was sure she was going to die," he reported. "She could hardly breathe and her heart was not functioning properly." After intensive treatment, the monkeys pulled through. However, Natasha began walking upright. None of the other monkeys who contracted the stomach flu displayed any unusual post-illness behaviors, and other than walking upright, Natasha acted completely normal. Horowitz said he never saw or heard of anything like this before and speculated that it may be the result of brain damage, or some other residual damage to the nervous system. [1] This story was reported all over the world, accompanied by a striking photograph of Natasha walking upright. A video of Natasha scampering about on her hind legs can be seen on You Tube.[2] The story inspired numerous headlines along the lines of "Missing Link?" and "Monkey Apes Humans", and a certain amount of discussion about evolution [3] and even political commentary. [4] After the initial news report not much was heard about Natasha. The zoo reported that Natasha walked upright for only four days, after which she returned to standard macaque movements. She has since given birth multiple times and lives a normal monkey life at the Safari Park. [5]

What lessons may be learned from this episode? Firstly, that severe illness may cause temporary damage in monkeys causing them to walk upright. This may be a factor in analyzing reports of apelike hominids, they may just be regular simians recovering from an ailment.



Although Natasha's case is said by zoo officials to be the only one on record of a monkey walking upright as a result of illness, it is clearly something demonstrated to be possible and may explain some unusual sightings. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, this case demonstrates the way in which anomalous phenomena are often reported. The initial news report of a walking monkey made a lot of waves and can be found on many news sites as well as sites devoted to the discussion of strange phenomena. However, the follow up report, that this effect lasted for all of four days and everything is now back to normal, was only reported by the Safari Park itself and not picked up by any news agencies. The item appears only in Hebrew and seems not to have been translated or referenced in any forum discussing the case. Recognizing that the upright walking lasted less than a week casts the entire episode in a different light, a temporary unusual side effect experienced while recovering from a severe illness, rather than a true change in the monkey's nature and behavior. Once again we see that when it comes to anomalous phenomena, repeating the splashy initial reports is not at all enough, and a follow up is needed to get a better understanding of the phenomena at hand.

## NOTES

1. "Monkey apes humans by walking on two legs", Associated Press, July 22, 2004.
2. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L\\_SjngmnO8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L_SjngmnO8)
3. The Israeli religious children's magazine HaChotam pointed out that a monkey walking upright is not evidence of man's evolution from primates <http://www.hachotam.org/he-il/kids/articles/science-and-faith/monkey-see-monkey-do/>
4. "Israeli Monkey's Lessons in Evolution", National Public Radio, July 23, 2004. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=3613530>
5. "Natasha the celebrity monkey gives birth again", news release from the Safari Park, Ramat Gan, March 1, 2007. <http://www.safari.co.il/arab/article.php?&id=284&prt=1>







*Fig 1* Natasha, from [primates.com](http://primates.com)



# ***BRITISH BALL LIGHTNING REPORTS 2009-2011***

***Sam Hall and TORRO FORUM***

The British-based TORRO Forum( TORnado Research Organisation) is an online group devoted to reporting meteorological events from a historical perspective and also as and when interesting events occur, particularly tornadoes and other varieties of severe weather. One phenomenon reported is ball lightning. This essay explores some ball lightning and GLO

(Globular Light Emitting Object)events between 2009 and 2011. Peter van Doorn, TORRO` s ball lightning moderator is responsible for posting the reports on the Forum. The reports have been abbreviated in some places.



*Fig 1 A Nineteenth Century depiction of Ball Lightning. Wikipedia Creative Commons*

## **BALL LIGHTNING © RICHARD MUIRHEAD**

Luminous, I saw you drift down this ancient corridor,

entering the professor`s study almost gleefully.

Then suddenly you made a sound like a clap of thunder,

leaving an acid smell.

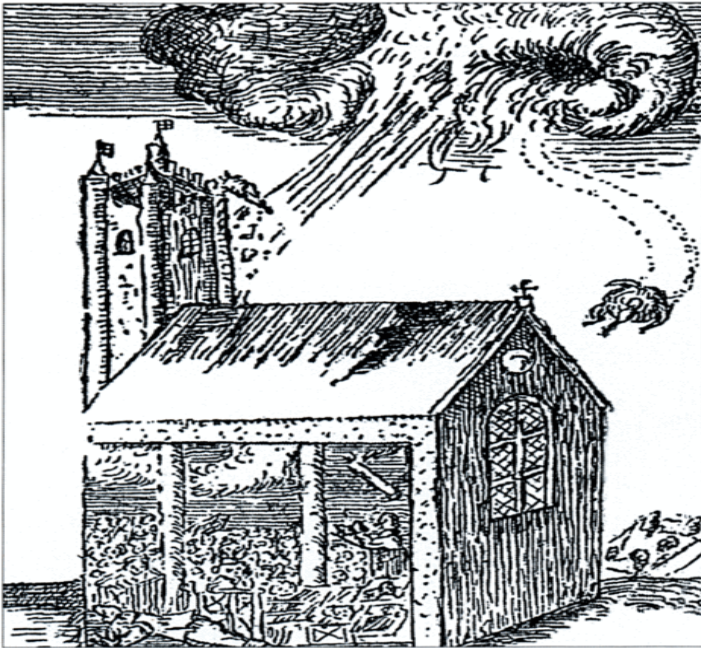
Whatever you are, please don`t come this way again. I won`t be pleased to see you.





During a severe thunderstorm at approx. 02:10 GMT, 26.11.2009 a house at Hastings, East Sussex was struck and the roof slightly damaged: opening found in tiles & lining felt forced out over guttering allowing water into house.

Female resident heard explosion & sound as if large vehicle had entered the lounge-went to investigate & saw a clear globe of light about the size of a football with what looked like a miniature tornado revolving inside. The GLO moved “slowly and erratically” and suddenly vanished without sound.



*Fig 2 The Great Thunderstorm, Widecombe, 1638,*  
Wikipedia Creative Commons

The GLO was in appearance like a clear glass ball and not fiery or lightning-like.

This incident was reported to the local authorities who in turn contacted me (rec. 31.12.2009) This is a very important case and I hope to be able to interview the witness in the near future.

Maidstone, Kent-7th March 2010. Location of sighting:Maidstone,Kent



Date of sighting: Sunday 7th March 2010. Time: Approx 8.15pm

Witness Name: Jane Davey. Witness Statement: I saw a small white ball in the sky ( which definitely wasn't a plane) and as it passed over the house we had a power cut covering our road and beyond. Power was restored after 20 seconds, although the internet and cable tv stayed off all evening. Sidney the cat was spooked for the rest of the evening and wouldn't settle.

Source: [www.uk-ufo.co.uk](http://www.uk-ufo.co.uk)

Comment: If you can provide further information on this or other possible UFO sightings in this area then please leave a comment or send details through our "submit sighting" form.

Comments on " Maidstone, Kent-7th March 2010"

Stephen Saunders March 11th 2010 at 2.40am That's a very interesting (and credible!) report. It sounds like a possible GLO/ball lightning event which could well have caused electricity and telecoms outages.

Here's a link to an interesting paper on the subject:  
[http://www.torro.org.uk/site/ball\\_info.php](http://www.torro.org.uk/site/ball_info.php)

Danielle March 12th 2010 at 4.52pm That's very interesting..I had a power cut, half way through a programme and I live in maidstone! That is quite cool!!!

Lindsay Hawthorne March 17th 2010 at 5.42pm 7th March 2010 was the same night my mam seen about 10 orange flying objects in the sky red orange/red sightings we live in Blyth Nortumberland.

Ball lightning (?) Colne,Lancs 18th August 2010

**Jonathan Webb.** 21/8/2010 Not quite sure how to interpret this report but it looks worth following up.

- - - - Original Message - - - -



This 'lightening ball' was observed in Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire. No thunder or rain showers at the time. Sky was dark and fairly clear.

**Barbara Davison.**

Dear Barbara

Many thanks for reporting this. Can confirm where you observed this and whether there was any thunder or rain showers around the time.

Best wishes

Jonathan W

Truly amazing! Last night (18th Aug) 9.22pm saw what I can only assume was a lightning ball.

Height was about two terraced houses. Orange/yellow ball which seemed to be inside a black circle (balloon). Had white streaks following behind it like a meteor. Thought it was at first. Travelling horizontally to the ground. Watched for about 15 seconds till it disappeared into the ground behind houses. Was expecting a big explosion but nothing at all.

Can't believe what I was seeing but that was it.

**Barbara Davison**

**Matthew Harris** 22/8/2010

I was in Lancs that week, by the coast and saw numerous Chinese Lanterns.

**Peter van Doorn** 5/9/2010

Have just read this having returned from Italy late yesterday. Not possible to draw any conclusion other than it was a literal UFO -



may have had an artificial origin-certainly not classifiable as 'BL' or a GLO-possibly a small hot air or fire balloon, possibly an unknown natural phenomenon.

Unexplained lights sighting - 6 May 2011

Date - 6 May 2011

Time - Approx. 18:40 BST

Observation location - St Anns Chapel, Cornwall PL18 9HP (looking south)

White lights/object location - estimated to have been over Saltash, Cornwall.

I have just spoken to my parents who live in St Anns Chapel in Cornwall. They were looking towards the south coast at the approaching rain when they observed two white lights/white objects in the sky some distance away. They estimated them to be located over Saltash approx. 12 miles away.

The lights/objects appeared to be approx. 1000 feet off the ground and were circling each other for about 30 seconds. One of the lights/objects then split away from the other and accelerated at a phenomenal speed horizontally in a westerly direction before it was lost from view in the grey cloud. It was estimated to have travelled over 10 miles before being lost from view over the Looe area. The other light had disappeared when they looked back towards Saltash.

My father who has seen many fighter jets over the years said that the acceleration of the light/objects must have been quite large to have seen them from what he estimates was a distance of approx 12 miles, and would have likely been seen by others.

The sighting was just as the 'spanish plume'† rain area was hitting the area.

Regards **John Pask**



**Nicola Parsons** Subject: Re: Unexplained lights sighting-06 May 2011

John, this is really strange as I have just had a similar experience, just around the time of a huge clap of thunder around 23.00...looking southwest, I only caught a brief glimpse and if it wasn't raining and extremely cloudy I would have thought I had seen a small meteor from a shower, but I know that is highly unlikely...I am wondering if it could be cloud to cloud lightning????

**John Pask**

Nicola, The white 'blobs' my parents saw slowly circled each other for 30 secs before one accelerated off away from the other one. Wouldn't have personally thought cloud to cloud lightning would act in such a manner, but I am no expert-any experts out there who may be able to help?

John

**Nicola Parsons**

It is very strange, I even had a neighbour comment on it this morning, they too saw a similar thing....I have no idea, it was in the direction of some electricity pylons near me, so I am not sure if they are involved....it would be good to have an expert opinion. :)

**Jonathan Webb**

Thanks for reporting this, John. It's interesting that it was some time before nightfall which makes some non meteorological explanations less likely. While another cause may come to light, there are some ball lightning incidents on record with similarities.....some involving aircraft. Will be interesting to hear any further accounts.

Best wishes.

**Peter van Doorn** Thanks for sending in this report John, though this



phenomenon clearly exceeds a meteorological solution . These lights were true UFOs: Unidentified aerial phenomena - I certainly do not believe that alien spaceships are visiting the earth, however strange light-emitting objects of an unidentifiable nature, exhibiting remarkable manoeuvres, have been witnessed in our skies for more than two thousand years.

These are the salient points:

“ The lights/objects appeared to be approx. 1000 feet off the ground and were circling each other for about 30 seconds. One of the lights/objects then split away from the other and accelerated to a phenomenal speed horizontally in a westerly direction before it was lost from view in the grey cloud. It was estimated to have travelled over 10 miles before being lost from view over the Looe area. The other light had disappeared when they looked back towards Saltash.”

The lights were “circling each other” - clarification needed here but this indicates purpose.

They were visible for c.30 seconds - a duration so great it rules out lightning or any known peripatetic meteorological phenomenon

“ One of the lights/objects then split away from the other and acceleration to a phenomenal speed horizontally in a westerly direction before it was lost from view in the grey cloud.”

This clearly indicates intelligent behaviour: If the objects were not `secret` aircraft developed , say by the USA , then they UFOs of unknown origin.

The most `advanced` form of BL, the GLO Navigator acts as if it has a brain , and certainly carries out sophisticated manoeuvres- I regard UFOs as `all weather` super-versions of the same phenomenon.

I would class this as an unknown aerial phenomenon<sup>1</sup> related to BL/GLOs-no direct connection with met conditions obvious, but these may have provided sufficient ambient energy for the objects to have become \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> How about angels? Richard.



visible to human eyes. I can only offer an enigma as explanation for a mystery!

### **John Pask**

Thanks for your comments everyone.

Peter, to clarify, the lights/objects were apparently following each other in a small circular motion.

I have looked on a various websites for other sightings but no luck yet! It occurred over Saltash which is a large town and it was daylight so someone else must also have seen them. I will buy the local paper which is out tomorrow and see if it mentions anything.

Peter John,

Thanks for the additional info.

Any further details from the local paper would be appreciated, as this is an interesting case worthy of record.



# ***CARL 'S COGITATIONS : GREAT SNAKES OF THE WORLD PART ONE***

***CARL MARSHALL***

*"As to what is meant by weird - and of course weirdness is by no means confined to horror- I should say that the real criterion is a strong impression strong impression of the suspension of natural laws or the presence of unseen worlds or the forces close to hand."* H.P

Lovecraft in a letter to Wilfred Blanch Talman August 24<sup>th</sup> 1926

This article is not to be taken as a definitive coverage of outsized snakes of the world; Rather just a few examples of some giant cryptozoological species as well as some personal speculation that at least one known species may have possible sub-specific variations of even larger proportions.

During my six years as curatorial assistant at Stratford Upon Avon Butterfly Farm I have had the opportunity and privilege to work with many unusual and often deadly species. You see, its not all pretty butterfly's, our latest "nasty" is a Brazilian Wandering Spider; *Phoneutria sp.* (the murderess) and she really is evil.

We also get donated snakes, usually about eight - ten a year; *Colubrids*, *Boids* and *Pythons* - of which some of these reptiles are brought in by the RSPCA due to neglect by owners who are ignorant of the care required or lack the sensitivity and commitment. They are also sometimes handed in by the owners themselves who have had to give up their pets often because the snake grew bigger than they were expecting.

The largest snake I have personally worked with was a 15 ft (4.5 metres) reticulated python which despite its large, but certainly not giant size, was very difficult to deal with because of its immense strength and aggressive nature. So now the question we pose - what happens when an owner buys a potential giant like a reticulated python as a "first snake" and it rapidly grows into a hyper aggressive monster? Pet shops do sell gigantic snake species like anacondas and reticulated pythons to





individuals who (at the time of writing) do not need any specific licensing to buy or keep them, so again, what happens when a snake exceeds 20ft (6 metres) in length and has the appetite to match? the owners have four choices open to them a) They can either:

- a) Adapt and keep the snake.
- b) Sell or relocate it to a responsible carer.
- c) Have euthanasia performed by a qualified veterinarian
- c) Illegally release it into the wild.

Unfortunately the latter has happened around the world where there are many instances of invasive snake species damaging the ecological balance of the area that they have escaped or been released into. Currently the Florida Everglades in North America has become home to the Burmese python which is obviously not its country or even continent of origin and subsequently they are causing all kinds of problems to local wildlife and their habitats.

It is believed by established zoology that the largest species of snake in the world in terms of bulk is the green anaconda from south America, which we know can reach a massive 28-30ft (approx 9.1 metres) long, although some acknowledge 37ft (11.2 metres). But does this species, or any other grow even bigger? I personally believe the green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*) does, possibly up to about 50-55ft (approx 16.7 metres) and also the reticulated python *Python (Broghammerus) reticulatus* which I feel could, if undisturbed, reach lengths of up to about 45-50ft (approx 15.2 metres) and the following article will discuss the implications of these estimations.

South America.

Quoted below is a witness account by adventurer F.W. Up de Graff and his team in 1923 regarding a colossal green anaconda in its natural habitat:

*"There's a dead alligator over there; let's get out of here."  
I turned to look in the direction in which he had pointed. In a moment I saw his mistake. There lay in the mud and water, covered with flies, butterflies and insects of all sorts, the most colossal anaconda which ever my wildest dreams had conjured up. Ten or twelve feet of it lay stretched out on the*





*Fig 1* The photo of the large yellow snake is of a 13ft albino Burmese python that I am posing with to give an indication of scale. This photograph was taken at Bags o' Reptiles, in Evesham, Worcestershire by the owner and good friend of mine Andy Badland.



*Fig 2* The close up photo of a snake's head is of a Reticulated python



*bank in the mud; the rest of it lay in the clear shallow water, one loop of it under our canoe, its body as thick as a man's waist.*

*I have told the story of its length many times since, but scarcely ever have been believed. It measured fifty feet for certainty, and probably nearer sixty. This I know from the position in which it lay. Our canoe was a twenty-four footer; the snake's head was ten or twelve feet beyond the bow; its tail was a good four feet beyond the stern; the centre of its body was looped up into a huge S, whose length was the length of our dug-out, and whose breadth was a good five feet.*

*I was in the stern where I couldn't reach the rifles, so I called out to Jack to shoot. He reached out for his weapon, but the noise he made in fumbling for the it alarmed the snake.*

*With one great swirl of water that nearly wrecked us it vanished. The agility with which it moved was absolutely astounding in view of its great bulk, in striking contrast to the one we skinned. When I thought of how the latter's decapitated body had coiled round my legs and nearly broken them in the last contraction of its dying muscles, I wondered what would have happened to us had that huge beast in its headlong flight taken a turn round the canoe. How utterly helpless the mightiest of men would be in the coils of such a monster!"*

Up de Graff. F. W. Head-hunters of the Amazon, 1923.

A snake of 60ft (18.2 metres)? I personally think a snake of this size is possible, yet improbable. There are even reports of anacondas of 150-200ft (approx 60.9 metres) but these are reports from frightened natives and non-scientific observers and should not be accepted at face value without sufficient corroborating evidence. One question we must ask in order to get to the bottom of the question of maximum size in any species of snake in the wild is how long do they live? Although its true that snakes never stop growing this rate of growth does slows with age, so there are definite limitations depending on the age expectancy of individual species. We know that anacondas in captivity can live for 30 years but we really don't know for sure about wild specimens.

Of course resources available, eg. prey animals and the nutritional quality of these will also have a big part to play in determining a definitive maximum size.

Green anaconda:

Snakes are surrounded by legends and mythology. In the bible the book of Genesis says that the serpent is the evil creature that deceived Eve into tasting the forbidden fruit and thus being the reason why man was expelled from the Garden of Eden.



In mythology however the snake has not always been seen as a symbol of evil.



*Fig 3 The painting of a giant anaconda by Maureen Ashfield*

In ancient Canaan it was the symbol of the god Eshmun, the equivalent of the Greek Aesculapius, the god of healing and connected to the underworld and reincarnation due to the snakes ability to cast off its old skin to make way for the new. This author found that In Belize in Central America locals believe the Wowla, which is the local name for the Common Boa Constrictor, is the mother of all snakes simply because it is the largest snake the peoples regularly come across, so therefore must be the mother to smaller snakes even if they belong to an entirely different variety. They also firmly believe that the Wowla is venomous after sunset. When the first Spanish explorers arrived in south America they named the green anaconda el Matatora; the bull killer.

Are we to believe that the early Spanish explorers really witnessed the spectacle of a giant anaconda constricting and consuming an adult bull or was this name purely the work of over-active imaginations? It is widely known that anacondas do catch and consume capybara, wild pigs and even on occasion Jaguars, so why couldn't a giant individual living in some rarely used, slow moving back river consume prey of bovine proportions?



Anacondas are mainly aquatic, but when this species does crawl out onto the land it struggles to pull its massive bulk around. Its circulatory system is also under great stress when crawling about terrestrially due to the snakes immense weight (this would normally be supported by the specific gravity of the water). The method used by this species to move terrestrially is called Rectilinear locomotion or "the caterpillar crawl", the snake uses two powerful opposing muscles connected to each rib to pull its body along, this form of locomotion usually accompany's lateral undulation, the ribs do not actually move only the muscles beneath the skin. The normal method used by smaller snakes is by actually walking on their ribs; which are again connected to muscles that are attached to the scutes or belly scales, however smaller snakes do also use rectilinear locomotion. When in the water the anaconda moves with incredible agility and grace, with blood circulation also being significantly increased.

For this reason alone I am prepared to believe that the real giant anacondas are likely to spend more of their time in the water than their common counterparts, only really crawling onto land when thermo-regulating, attempting to locate another water source during the dry season or locating terrestrial prey items, so therefore spending much of their time hidden in dark murky swamps, undetected and away from human activity. If this theory is correct then this is a positive outcome because this species is like many animals around the world is declining in overall number and maybe facing extinction. A green anaconda of 30ft+ would most likely be a female as males do not usually attain these sizes.

*"The acquisition of energy in the natural world involves a complex interaction between the biophysic environment in which an animal lives, resources available and there distribution, the social system and how it might constrain access to resources and consequently mating success, and the risk involved in acquiring resources".*

Where better to for a snake to achieve colossal sizes and successfully support their weight, than in an aquatic environment? Let us hope they remain there indefinitely.

Giant Anaconda  
Sucuriju Gigante:



As mentioned previously, zoology recognises the green anaconda to be the largest known species of snake in the world, and this is likely to be correct but is there another larger ecotype somewhere in south America's vast rainforests and backwaters? some believe there is. What of the Giant Anaconda? The Giant Anaconda or Sucuriju Gigante is reported to be a colossal anaconda type *Boid* which may (or may not) be a new species/ sub-species. It has also been claimed to be a living descendent of the prehistoric *Gigantophis garstini* from the Eocene epoch (54.8 - 33.7 million years ago), However we must consider *Titanoboa cerrejonensis* from the Paleocene epoch (65.5 - 55.8 million years ago) as another suggestion simply because *G. garstini* was from what is today Egypt and Algeria, whereas *T. cerrejonensis* is known from Columbia, this alone makes this more likely even though this species apparently became extinct a considerable time before *G. garstini*. My personal belief however is that it is far more plausible that this enormous anaconda type snake is just that - an undiscovered variety of the green anaconda.

Maybe one day a lucky explorer will get the chance of a lifetime and actually observe and clearly film one of these giants basking in the early sun on the waters edge and whether at 50ft (15.2 metres) or 150ft (45.7 metres), it will be a great discovery and one that hopefully will permanently link the discipline's of natural history and cryptozoology for good.

The Camoodi; a giant horned anaconda is also reported but these could just be very large green anaconda's that have developed extensively wide heads with age and the paired light and dark eye stripes that normally run back at slight angles behind the eyes have moved even closer onto the top of the snakes head as the jaws widen, creating the impression of horns when viewed briefly from above when travelling through water. However the Camoodi is usually reported at lengths of only about 20ft ( 6.09 metres) not a considerable size for the green anaconda, so maybe its something more interesting after all.



Britain.

## Monster in the Thames.

In February 2009 Abraham W. claimed that a photo he had posted on the Mysterious Britain Website was that of a genuine giant snake swimming in the Thames. The enormous river snake is claimed to be real and it does appear that ships in the photograph are having to swerve in order to avoid contact with it. One on-line reader stated that it resembled a pipe or mud bank more than a mystery serpent but I think it looks far more like the work of the Photoshop computer program. Another very similar photo also released in 2009 reportedly showing another giant snake in the Amazon in South America which again looks to be a digitally enhanced hoax. On some web sites this photograph was claimed to have been taken in Borneo.

There have been many examples of escaped snake species in Britain existing in the wild , here is a brief list of some examples;

In 1966 on Canterbury Road in Croydon, the RSPCA were informed that a 10ft (3.0 metres) python of unknown species was on the loose in a garage building and was surviving on rats. Firemen were called in to remove the floorboards but no snake was discovered.

An African rock python was discovered in a pillow case in a lane in Walker, Newcastle in May 2012. A 12 year old boy bravely took the animal to a local pet shop where it was described as very aggressive.

A Burmese python was seen in the morning in the undergrowth at Lingswood in Northamptonshire in March 2010.

A 12ft (3.6 metre) long python of unknown species was rescued by the fire brigade after it got stuck under a shed in a garden in Cornwall in April 2010.



A woman with a phobia of snakes (*Ophidiophobia*) found two living in her flat in Bournemouth. The first a 4ft (1.2 metre) corn snake ( formerly named *Elaphe gattuta* but now *Pantherophis guttatus*) was caught and taken to a local pet shop, the second a similar sized Honduran milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum hondurensis*) was killed with a hammer after biting the woman's daughter twice on the hand as she tried to catch it. Both these snakes are believed to have escaped from a local pet shop.

#### WARNING:

The Honduran milk snake displays very similar red, black, yellow bands to the highly venomous Coral snakes of North America, and actually the very same as some other coral snake species from elsewhere in the world and unless a 100% positive identification can be made, snakes of this appearance should not be handled by the public. There is a rhyme that can help differentiate the harmless milk snakes from highly venomous North American corals:

"Red to Black venom lack, Red to Yellow kills a fellow".

Police have warned parents to keep children and pets indoors after a hungry 7.5ft (2.2 metres) Boa constrictor called Diva escaped from her vivarium and her owners home in Broom crescent Ipswich.

Snakes native to Britain are adapted to living in colder conditions. Any tropical species that ends up out doors in Britain will need to find an area to affectively regulate their body temperature in order to survive (eg. move, shed skin, catch and digest food), which is what some of the previously noted escapees were attempting. I have recently been informed that a large Burmese python is surviving down a rabbit warren near the city of Birmingham feeding on the rabbits, but I have not yet been able to validate this, however we can safely surmise that this is a very unlikely story as the Burmese python would not survive well in these conditions as





big snakes tend to need a more continual heat source to metabolise. So far it appears some smaller individuals are actually surviving here. The Aesculapian rat snake (*Elephe longissima*) has been living well in a small area of Wales since the 1970's with a steady population at Colwyn Bay. Its believed that the British ancestors of these snakes escaped from a local zoo where they used to be imported from Italy. There have been no serious reports of this invasive species outside Wales.

One species put forward as a potential survivor is the Amur ratsnake (*E. schrencki*) as they can digest food and generally do well at temperatures of about 75 f (23.9 c) and hibernates for 3-5 months of the year so could over winter underground in a rabbit warren where it is a fairly constant 55-57 degrees Fahrenheit (13-14 degrees Celsius) and possibly survive and breed here indefinitely due to the thermal inertia of the warren. So what about large snakes surviving here?

Well this is very unlikely, even though its true that larger snakes would take longer to cool and therefore could remain active longer than smaller species in the British climate it is also true that they would also take longer to re-heat and they would have to find quite a considerable heat source to successfully achieve this, such as a man made heating system. This is why I believe its more likely that big snakes are to be found in and around, or even underneath city's rather than in a natural environment.

As we are all aware, climate change is increasing the overall yearly temperature which will eventually make it easier for these animals to live here. Currently though it is very difficult for most non native snakes to survive , even ones that could potentially tolerate relatively cool climates such as Corn Snakes, as they do not tend to attain the ambient heat available in order to successfully digest food; put simply the digestive process slows drastically as the snake cools and the meal rots within the snakes gut leading to slow and painful death.

**TO BE CONTINUED...**



## ***More Flying Lizard Reports From Australia and beyond***

There was a report in The Courier-Mail, Brisbane on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1934 (via Trove, Australia) as follows: **Maryborough-** “Mr W.R Hetherington, of Torquay, brought to Maryborough a specimen of the flying lizard about four feet in length which was captured near Saltwater Creek. The flying lizard resembled the better known frilled lizard. When aroused it exhibited small fanlike wings behind the head. Its captor had no doubt about its identity, a similar specimen caught previously having been sent to Brisbane for identification.”

I find the report below interesting in the Cairns Post of September 13<sup>th</sup> 1948 (also from Trove.) because , if this is not referring to a fossil, then was it something more substantial, closer in time to 1948?

Moscow (A.P.) The newspaper “Kazakhstan Pravda” reported that the complete skeleton of a pterodactyl - a flying lizard - has been discovered in the Tamir district of Kazakhstan.

This is the third specimen of the ancient ancestor of birds to be found in Russia. The bones are now being studied by scientists.



# ***The Uncertain Fate of Steller`s Sea Cow***

***Richard George***

The belated discovery and premature extinction of that placid herbivore, Steller`s Sea Cow, *Hydrodamalis gigas*, is one of the saddest stories ever told. So when, as a student (not of zoology, I must add), I read an account of its possible survival in a book by Janet and Colin Bord (1), I was riveted. It still captures my imagination like few other Fortean topics.

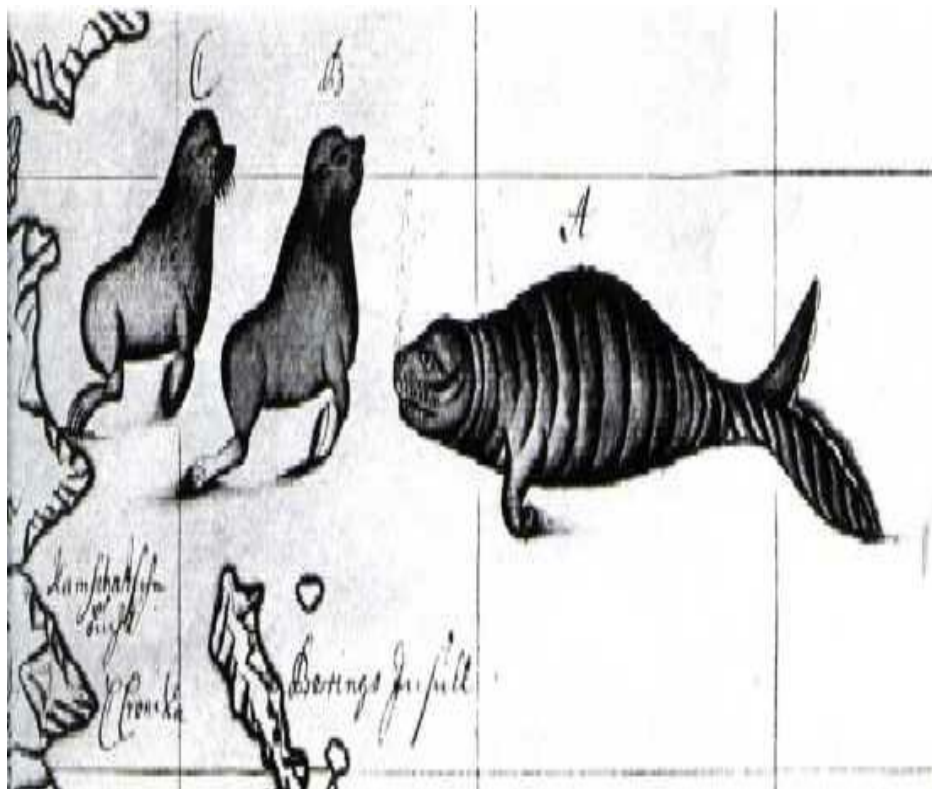
The chronology,briefly is as follows (2). Steller`s Sea Cow was christened by legendary naturalist Wilhelm Steller, in 1741,on an expedition to Kamchatka in the Russian Far East led by Vitus Bering. Unfortunately for the creature, it could feed more than thirty men for a month,was delicious ( it tasted like veal, apparently) and its fat produced flames, and hence heat and light, without smoke or odour, an important consideration in a cold region in the days before electricity.

Officially, the last was killed in 1768.

The Bords begin by citing a piece by Michel Raynal (3). They claim it claims that there were “ numerous” sightings in the nineteenth century. But the bulk of their evidence lies in a trinity of later reports.

In the early 1950s, a whale harpooner told Dr S.K. Klumov about a mysterious animal he had seen several times off Kamchatka, near the Commander Islands.” Of course,it is not a whale,” he told the academic. “ We know the whales by their appearance, by their fins and by their blowing...” It was massive,more than 30 feet long,black,and with no dorsal fin





*Fig 1 Steller's Sea Cow. Wikipedia Creative Commons*

and it was always seen at the same time of year, early July.

In 1962, once again in July, but much further north, off Cape Navarin, a group of witnesses, described as seasoned hunters and whalers, glimpsed a group of animals unlike any known cetacean or pinniped. These were slightly smaller, between 18 and 26 feet long, very dark, with a small head clearly separated from the body, an upper lip overlapping the lower one, and a distinctive fringed tail.

This second sighting attracted serious attention in Russia, to the extent that an article by Dr. Klumov was published in *Priroda* magazine. (4) Strikingly, on the basis of this sighting, Steller's Sea Cow was included



five years later in Richard Fitter's book on vanishing [note Present Participle] wild animals (5). "But" Fitter acknowledged, "the Russian zoologist V.G. Geptner believes this to have a misidentification of female narwhals."

Narwhals? According to my trusty Collins Guide (6), Monodon monoceros, although it does lack a dorsal fin, is mottled grey and white, not black, and females are only up to 13 feet in length. The larger males are, of course, unmistakable by reason of their horns.

I am the first to admit that I lack Dr. Geptner's qualifications as a scientist. But here, as so often in Fortean topics, the explanation from on high is totally implausible. I also cannot accept the claim (made on the Internet) that these were stray Elephant Seals. These, surely, would once again be too small and the wrong colour.

The Bords' final sighting dates from 1976, and here they nail their colours to the mast: "A corpse was found in the summer of 1976 at Anapkinskaya Bay." Alas, they are stretching the facts.

Their source is Arthur C. Clarke, or more accurately a book in his name written by John Fairley and Simon Welfare (7). They quote an article in a Russian periodical by Vladimir Malukovich (8), which describes a sighting made by Ivan Chechulin, projectionist of the Karaginskaya culture and propaganda team, when he was involved in the annual salmon fishing season off Kamchatka. Just after a heavy storm, Chechulin, projectionist of the Karaginskaya culture and propaganda team, when he was involved in the annual salmon fishing season off Kamchatka. Just after a heavy storm, Chechulin had noticed an unknown animal on a tidal belt. On being shown a picture of *Hydromalis gigas*, he said "Just the same thing. The same tail, the fore flippers and the head..." He was amazed to be told the creature was extinct."

Scientists then discovered that a *piece of bone* exhibited in a local museum appeared to be from a Steller's Sea Cow that had died about ten years previously.

The Bords conclude on an optimistic note: "In the early 1980s Soviet researchers



were said to be actively searching for live specimens off Kamchatka, so it is likely to be only a matter of time before Steller's sea-cow [sic] is pronounced 'alive and well', and not extinct after all. "There is one more alleged sighting, from 1977, from the Gulf of Anadyr, north of Cape Navarin. A fisherman is said to have touched one.

Sadly, in the 35 years since, to the best of my knowledge, the trail has gone cold. There are two alleged sightings on the Cryptomundo website from 2006 and 2010, both in September, but these are immediately suspect as they are from the Pacific Northwest, off Washington state, and appear to refer to smaller animals.

We should not lose hope just yet. Ten years ago, a Channel 4 series on cryptozoology, *In Search of Mythical Monsters*, pointed out that hunting and trapping alone rarely cause extinction, and also raised the serious possibility that the giant Short-Faced Bear, *Arctodus simus*, officially extinct for more than 10,000 years, could still be roaming the poorly mapped vastness of Kamchatka.

And as I write this article, the Daily Express (October 5, 2011) is reporting on an international scientific expedition to Kemerovo region, in western Siberia, to investigate alleged sightings. Compared to the accepted date of extinction of *Gigantopithecus* and its ilk, less than 250 years for *Hydrodamalis* is brief indeed.

What also strikes me, gazing at an atlas as the dusk falls, is how much more remote and thinly populated Steller's Sea Cow country is even than western Siberia. Kemerovo is a coal-mining area with several large cities. The Gulf of Anadyr, by contrast, is nearly a hundred degrees of longitude further east, near the Bering Strait, with only a few scattered centres of population: Beringovskiy, Anadyr itself, Ugol'nyye Kopi, Uel'Kal, Egvekinot, Nunligran. The Gulf itself is 200 miles wide. If *Hydrodamalis gigas* survives anywhere, it is probably here.

Sceptics, however - and people, never let us forget, are allowed to be sceptical - will point out that Steller's Sea Cow was very, very large, and that the bigger an animal is, the less likely it is to escape attention. The Bards themselves are aware of this principle, when on the same



page of their book they commit to posterity the immortal insight (with respect to an alleged monster chicken) “ It is hard to see how a bird with 8- foot footprints could go undetected for long”.

And the Bords` sightings date from the Soviet era, when its Far East was a closed region. Today it welcomes an increasing number of adventurous tourists, and is under the mass scrutiny of Google Earth. If Steller`s Sea Cow is still out there, you would expect more witnesses, not none at all.

There is a further problem. The Bords, much as I love their paradoxological gazetteers, have proved themselves unreliable in their transmission of evidence. An alleged sighting and a bone do not add up to a whole, fresh carcass. This means we would have to go back to the original Russian articles, which are hard to find even if one reads Russian (and most of us, myself included, do not). You will have noticed how much of this material is quoted at one or more removes: at times it resembles a set of Russian dolls.

And does the word *propaganda* , with reference to Mr. Chechulin, concern you?

Mark Pilkington, in his brilliant book *Mirage Men*, makes a strong case that many UFO accounts have been fabricated by the U.S. military and intelligence services to distract attention from top secret terrestrial aeronautic projects.

## REFERENCES

1 Janet and Colin Bord, *Modern Mysteries of the World* (1989) , p. 300 f

2 David Day, *Vanished Species* (revised edition, 1989), p.215ff

3 Michel Raynal, “ Does the Steller`s sea cow still survive ?” , *INFO Journal* 51, pp. 15-19

4 S.K. Klumov, “ Do large unknown animals still exist on the earth?,” *Priroda* no. 8 (1963), pp. 73-5.



5 Richard Fitter, *Vanishing Wild Animals of the World* (1968) , p.49.

6 David MacDonald, Priscilla Barrett, *The Collins Field Guide The Mammals of Britain and Europe* (1993) , p.173

7 John Fairley, Simon Welfare, *Arthur C. Clarke`s Chronicles Of The Strange And Mysterious* (1987), p. 104f.

8 Vladimir Malukovich, “ Where are you, Steller`s sea cow?”  
*Kamchatsky Komsomolets*, January 1977





# ***NOTES AND QUERIES***

Richard George asks: “ Does anybody know of Steller’s Sea Cow sightings from the Russian Far East after 1977?” (See his essay on pp 51-56)

The following story has to be the strangest out of Ireland I have ever heard of and that includes mystery animals, leprechauns, etc:  
Béaloideas is an Irish folklore journal.

## **THE TINY FOOTBALLERS**

Some years ago there was a man living near Ballyroan who used to work for a farmer in Colt. One evening in summer he was returning home from work. He used to cross the fields as a short-cut, and after he had passed through the bog and entered Ballyroan he saw a number of tiny men kicking a football.

He watched them for quite a long time, and in the end one of them came over and addressed him thus: “ Kick the ball, Jimmie!” and at this he made several attempts to kick it , but no matter how near it appeared to him he was unable to hit it. The game continued for quite a long time, and in the end his turn came, and he struck the ball. When he did so, he fell in a dazed condition on the ground, and when he recovered the little men had disappeared. Béaloideas vol 9 1939. (1)

Does anyone have similar stories of tiny footballers?



I found the following on the British Library 19th Century On-line newspaper archive.

## **LUMINOUS WORMS**

Luminous earthworms (says the “Daily Chronicle”) have recently been seen in Richmond and other parts of the Thames Valley. But it is pointed out that these phosphorescent annelids are not uncommon, having been described by Grimm as early as the year 1670. Many marine worms are also luminous. Many marine worms also are luminous. Mr Hilderic Friend thinks an occasional phosphorescent worm may be useful to the race in so far that it indicates to them the whereabouts of the others with which it lives in union, for though earthworms do not possess eyes, Darwin clearly proved that they are sensible to light. (2)

Continuing the theme of worms, the following was in The Hong Kong Telegraph of July 6th 1907:

## **TRAIN STOPPED BY WORMS**

### **STRANGE PHENOMENON ON THE SIBERIAN RAILWAY**

The *Dalyokaya Okraina* (translated in the *Japan Advertiser*) reports that No 3 post train, before reaching Pogradichnaya station recently, began to proceed more and more slowly until suddenly it stopped-entirely. The passengers jumped out from the coaches and beheld a strange scene. The two locomotives were puffing and hissing, the wheels turned but the train did not stir from the spot. On examination it was seen that the line was covered with some kind of green moving mass, which turned out to be worms, apparently a species of woodworms. They thickly covered the entire road and thus the locomotives were stopped. The poor passengers had to walk for a distance of five vents (?) , which the train covered at a snail's pace, the journey taking three hours, while passengers and rail servants helped to clear the rail of the worms. It would be interesting to , says our contemporary, how such a large migration of worms can be explained, and if a similar phenomena has been observed at any other time. In Manchuria the older residents might be able to answer this question. It may be added that in America have been held up in much the same fashion by migrations of caterpillars (3)



On the I Hate Butterflies Online Community: " Girl swallows butterfly, dies. 08/12/02 15:39 - (SA)

Uitenhage - A nine year old girl has died in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape after accidentally swallowing a butterfly SABC radio news reported on Sunday. Megan Baartman's uncle, Johnny Baartman says the girl was chasing butterflies when one flew into her mouth. She began choking shortly afterwards. Her mother took her to a doctor, but she later died. It is suspected that her breathing passage was blocked. Doctors say a powdery substance on butterflies may cause internal organs to swell. "

"And there's also the fact that certain species of butterflies and moths can cause blindness. If you rub the scales off the wings and you accidentally rub your eyes, you can blind yourself. It's somewhere in the forums." (4)

Also: **Butterfly cemetery**

by privolavacnavytah » Thu Jan 05, 2012 10:55 pm

I never knew, why I'm so afraid of these flying creatures. I can remember as a small child, I was even chasing them in a fields and giving them freedom again. But now I'm scared so much I can't even go out to the nature in the summer, cause they are fluttering all over. I was thinking what exactly caused this fear and I can recall on one story, from my later childhood.

I was around 8 years old, playing hide and seek with my cousin in our grandma's farm-house.

When I was about to hide, I found really great place where my granny kept her farm equipment. So I jumped in there very quickly and squatted down not to be seen.

Then I opened my eyes and in that moment, I saw hundreds - thousands of dead butterflies and wings. All over the ground around me!

All of them were one sort. The peacock butterfly with deadly blue eyes on it's wings.

As I jumped out scared it made an air swirl and dead wings were flying all over as well on MYSELF!!!

I know from that time I never entered places like that one was. With time, I forgot experience totally..

But now, I think this was the cause of my crazy fear, because the most



I know from that time I never entered places like that one was. With time, I forgot experience totally. But now, I think this was the cause of my crazy fear, because the most awful and scariest butterfly for me is the peacock butterfly :( Privolavacnavytah (5)

### Re: Butterfly cemetery

by KixyBoo » Fri Feb 17, 2012 1:16 pm

That's awful :( (i think sometimes the dead ones are as scary as ones that are still alive. (6)



*Fig 1* Peacock butterfly . By Korall. Wikipedia Commons.  
Stockholm, Sweden.



## A BRITISH TREE FROG IN WARWICKSHIRE IN 1883

The following report appeared in The Midland Naturalist vol 6 1883

TREE FROG IN ENGLAND - I think it may interest some of your readers to know that my little brothers, when out for a walk near Hampton-on-the-Hill last Saturday, caught and brought home alive a small tree frog, which seems to answer to the description of the green one ( *Hyla viridis* ) which is common on the Continent, but which I have never heard of as an inhabitant of Great Britain. The creature was about 1 ½ inch long , the body of a beautiful bright pea-green colour above and white beneath; a dirty yellowish line ran down the side from head to tail. Its legs were green above, and of a dark reddish colour below; each of the toes was furnished near the tip with a flat round sucker similar to those on the foot of a fly.



Fig 1

Green Tree Frog John E.Holbrook. N.American herpetology.

The throat was very capacious and hung down like a pouch. When placed in the conservatory it exhibited great activity, climbing and leaping from plant to plant almost like a small squirrel. Fearing it might escape, and until I could ascertain something as to its habits and food, I placed the frog in a large box with some plant, where it remained until



Monday, but then died, whether from want of food or water I do not know. I have now had it preserved in spirits, and shall be pleased to show it to anyone who may feel interested in the capture. All the books I have seen on the zoology of England say that no species of tree frog is known here, but if so, the finding of this one is difficult to account for, especially as it was caught quite out in the country, at a long distance from any place from which it is at all likely to have escaped. - LLOYD CHADWICK, 27, High Street, Warwick, August 23, 1883 (7)

Darren Naish in his Tetrapod Zoology Book One ( CFZ Press 2010) comments: “ ...It’s also now being suggested that the European tree frog *Hyla arborea* colonies of the New Forest are also natives.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D.Naish Tetrapod Zoology (2010) p.144

**Fig 2 A WHITE SWALLOW**



The text under this photo of July 15th 1932 in the Southern Daily Echo reads: “ A pure white swallow with pink eyes and pink feet was found at Baskett’s Farm,Gurnard, by Mr.Butchers, the tenant of the farm. The birds had built their nest in one of the pigstyes on the farm, on the ledge of the wall inside the sty, about 6 feet from the ground. The nest contained four young ones, three of which were ordinary swallows,



while the fourth one was pure white. They had flown before the photograph could be taken, and had enjoyed some 24 hours freedom. It was hoped they would return to the nest at night to sleep, which luckily they did, and after being caged for a short period till morning while a photograph was taken, they were all again liberated. A white swallow has been seen in the same neighbourhood for three successive years, and the inhabitants are of opinion that this interesting albino is from the same pair of birds. (8)

The Examiner ( Launceston, Tasmania) May 30th 1914 reported on a poisonous bird from Papua New Guinea:

### **THE BIRD OF DEATH**

Only one specimen of venomous bird is known to the student of ornithological oddities -the Rpir (?) N'Doob or "Bird of Death", a feathered paradox of New Guinea. Persons bitten by the creature are seized by maddening pains, which rapidly extend to every part of the body . Loss of sight, convulsions, and lockjaw are symptoms which follow in rapid succession. (9)

The following paragraph is from the Natural History Journal 1888.

### **FOX HYBRID ?**

A STRANGE CREATURE.- Whilst driving home from Chelmsford this morning I saw running across a field a strange animal of a sort of grey colour.It seemed to be something between a little fox and a hare. It did not seem to be the right colour for a fox, yet it had a longish tail tipped with white; as far as we could see too, it had long, brown ears tipped with white. My father, who was with me thought it was a cat; but then a cat would not have such ears, I argued. Then someone else suggested it must be a hare; but the long tail put an end to the suggestion, and we none of us thought it was of the right colour for a



fox. We watched it till it was out of sight, but could not make out what it was. When we first saw it it was in a field, running cross-ways, jumping over the borks; [Ridges in a ploughed field]but afterwards, it went through the hedge into a meadow, where it ran into a hollow out of sight. I think it must have been *a young vixen*. Apr 18th, 1886.-*Eva Christy's Diary*. (10)

### AN ELECTRIC CAT

From the Manchester City News in the early 1890s:

“ There is a cat in a cottage on the Carnice Mount, near Monte Carlo, which seems destined for a show. That electric sparks are evolved from a cat's skin rubbed in dry air is of course a very familiar observation. But the Monte Carlo cat, according to *Electricity*, is on very dry, dark nights quite a spectacle. Every movement of the body sends off hundreds of minute blueish sparks, something like those discharged by ill (?) adjusted brushes though not so pronounced in colour. They make a noise , on a small scale resembling the crackling of burning furze. Stroking the fur increases the sparkling, and ruffling is the wrong way - which annoys the animal, while the other in no way affects it - produces a miniature pyrotechnic display quite remarkable.” (11)

Finally a scare about a supposed gorilla from New Zealand in 1871:

### THE SUPPOSED GORILLA

The “ Illawarra Mercury” writes:- “Since the report of the strange animal seen by Mr George Osborne on the Avondale Ranges, and which he supposes was a gorilla, has appeared, speculations regarding the existence and species of that ‘natural curiosity’ have been rife in this district. Several parties have been exploring the bush and gullies in the supposed whereabouts of his gorillaship during the past fortnight, but without success. On Wednesday last a party of between 20 and 30 gentlemen assembled in the vicinity indicated, with dogs,





ropes and firearms, but after considerable wanderings had been made by some of the party, and much patient waiting on the part of the others, night closed on the expedition without their having obtained either scent or sight of the gorilla. Strange steps and marks were noticed up the side of a fig tree in one of the gullies explored, and as the peculiar formation of the tree providing a hiding place near the upper part of the trunk, it was cut down by several willing hands, but on the tree being laid low an 'old man opossum' made his appearance instead of the gorilla. It is hoped the animal may be captured without delay: and as there is some talk of an expedition being started in Sydney for the purpose, the young men in this district should bestir themselves, and not allow others to carry away the praise and profit as well as the prize involved in the strange affair. A person who has resided on the Bulli Mountain for several years positively asserts that an animal similar to that seen by Osborne, but considerably larger, has been seen in that locality more than once, and by different persons, and that no dogs can be found to face it." (12)

### BLACKBIRD FEEDING CARP IN OXFORD

The following extraordinary story appeared in The Country Man magazine for Aug-Sept 1997 Wildlife and Tame column. Editor's remarks in italics.

**Blackbird feeds the fish** Mr H.M. Youd of Wheatley, Oxon, writes: Some years ago, I was working at Christchurch College, Oxford. At the centre of Tom Quad is a large pool, famous for its fountain. The pool contained a number of big carp that rose habitually to the surface for food. One day, to our utter amazement, a female blackbird perched on the edge of the pool with a beak full of insects and began to feed the fish, who gratefully accepted. For about three weeks, this spectacle attracted students, staff and tourists alike. Given that it was May, I presume the industrious bird must have mistaken the gaping mouths of the fish for a hungry brood.



Sadly, I was informed that last year killed all the fish in the pool and the college was uncertain whether or not to re-stock. So it is not clear when, or if, this remarkable event will ever be repeated. [ *This is a fascinating case, though not unique; I have seen photographs of a couple of other celebrated examples involving different bird species. As Mr Youd suggests, the blackbird, which probably had fledglings of its own in the vicinity, was almost certainly duped into parting with its food by the carps` gape ( which is quite birdlike) If the gape were yellow or orange, it would have presented a particularly strong `feed me` stimulus to the parent bird.*] (13)

N.B “ Christchurch College is now known as Christ Church according to Rob Wilkes, a friend who works at the Bodleian Library.

### **PYGMY ELEPHANT IN SOUTHERN VIETNAM IN 1794?**

There is a fascinating list of the tribute given to the Chinese Emperor in 1794 by the British envoy, Lord Macartney, in the The Daily Advertiser (New York) October 9<sup>th</sup> 1794, which includes, under the words `Cochin China` (Southern Vietnam) `A very small elephant, 14 inches high.` Now if this was just an ordinary juvenile elephant of any species known then, there would be no significance, but the point is this is a list of exotic and special objects, so there must have been something rather special about this particular elephant. (14)

### **CRYPTIDS OF 1904**

The Times of Swazieland November 5<sup>th</sup> 1904 reported in a story titled **Animals Uncaught**, a round-up of the world`s mystery animals of 108 years ago. This gives an interesting insight into which animals were thought to be strange then. They included.

1. A new species of jaguar...It`s a big black fellow, and tremendously fierce. Nobody has ever taken one alive.
2. In Burmah somewhere is a rhinoceros that has a black hide and big tufted ears. The hide has been seen by white men lots of times, but they haven`t ever seen a living animal.



3. Up in the Himalayas a man has been looking for- what do you suppose? A unicorn. He may be crazy - He may be right. He says that he has heard so many tales from the native hunters up there of the existence of an one-horned antelope horse that he is bound to try and get one...

4. Down in New Zealand, comparatively small as the land is, there are many animal and bird mysteries still. They say there is a brand new - that is, new to the world - type of animal on the order of the duck bill down there yet. Darwin always thought that some day a veritable lizard-bird (not a flying lizard, but a true missing link between the birds and the reptiles) might be found there.

5. “ One explorer found mysterious footprints in the snow of the high mountains of New Zealand, but never came up with the boast that had made it. But they were such strange footprints that other scientists agreed with him that the thing that made them was quite unknown to the world, and must be a wonderful thing.” (15)



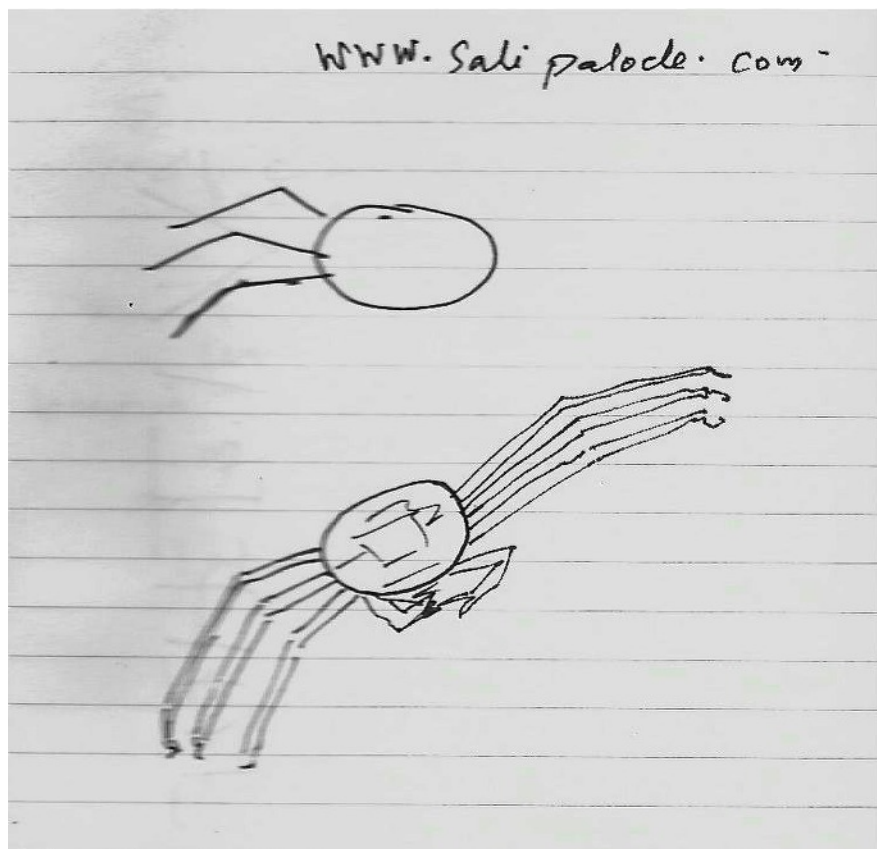
*Fig 3* Duck Billed Platypus - once a native of New Zealand? John Gould 1863 Wikipedia Commons



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This is a drawing of an unknown species of crab, drawn for Matt Salusbury by Indian naturalist Sali Palode. Matt believes this gives him permission to allow me to publish it here. It was seen in an inland forest in Kerala state, India. There is also a photo of it on Sali's web site [www.salipalode.com](http://www.salipalode.com) where it is shown to be violet in colour. In an article in the Saturday Telegraph magazine of February 11th 2012 'Paradise in Peril' concerning Madagascar, Richard Grant states: " We saw crabs scuttling sideways in a forest many miles from the ocean" (1)

### REFERENCE

1. Paradise in Peril R Grant ,Telegraph Magazine February 11th 2012



# **D E V O   J O C K O   H O M O**

**They tell us that**

**We lost our tails**

**Evolving up**

**From little snails**

**I say it's all**

**Just wind in sails**

**Are we not men?**

**We are devo!**

**We're pinheads now**

**We are not whole**

**We're pinheads all**

**Jocko Homo**

**Are we not men?**

**D-e-v-o**

**God made man but he used the monkey to do it**

**Apes in the plan**

**But who can prove it?**

**I can walk like an ape**

**Talk like an ape**

**I can do what a monkey can do**

**God made man**

**But a monkey supplied the glue**



# ***BOOK REVIEWS***

**In the Wake of Bernard Heuvelmans - An Introduction to the History and Future of Sea Serpent Classification.** Michael A Woodley Bideford England: CFZ Press 2008 ISBN 978-1-905723-20-1

This is an academic and thoroughly readable manuscript Woodley's expression) examining sea serpent classification from the earliest days of "the Rafinesque model" of 1819 up to Bruce Champagne in 2007 who "essentially retains the categories developed by Heuvelmans as 'archetypes', but in addition...employs a multifactor, intensely data-driven methodology to build his own categories or 'types.'" After this Introduction comes the Comparative Methodologies section which looks at different ways of establishing the identity of a cryptid depending on the data available, including Woodley's own "plausibility method" which is hypothesis driven when faced with cryptids about which little is known, such as the Mongolian death worm, (and the Namibian flying snake of course).

A Conclusion summarises these methods and the author states: "The purpose of this manuscript is to use a combination of contemporary zoological knowledge and aspects of the plausibility method to re-evaluate Heuvelmans' final eight cryptid identities, so as to shed light on possible new and alternative identity theories - something that is in many respects long overdue." Following on from this, there are sections covering Heuvelmans' pinnipeds, Heuvelmans' archaeocetes, The super- otter and the many- humped sea serpent: close cousins? Then Marine 'saurians': genuine archaeocetes ?, Super-eels: a many faceted enigma, Giant invertebrates: The most plausible category. I was particularly interested in the con-rit, a.k.a the many- finned sea serpent, as there



was a case in 1883 at Hongay Beach, Vietnam and the oarfish, which Woodley places in the super-eel category. Oarfish have turned up in Hong Kong from time to time.

**Discovering Natural Israel** Michal Strutin New York: Jonathan David Publishers 2001 ISBN 0-8246-0413-X

This must be one of the best books available on the fauna and flora of Israel and at the same time one of the best natural history books generally speaking, of this new century, even though it was published 11 years ago. It is well researched, brings in Abraham, archaeology, Biblical references, historical events, Josephus, natural historians and covers in great detail, (though not in an overly academic way) the natural history from south to north, starting with an Introduction which states “ Israel is full of natural wonder. Yet, despite the fact that vegetation clothes the hillsides and fringes the rivers, despite the fact that birds by the millions travel through the land and more than seventy mammal and eighty reptile species live upon it, untwining natural history from human history is difficult if not impossible.” The main eleven chapters cover The Southern Negev to Western Galilee and the Coast. There are numerous colour photos and maps and also boxes on some pages which describe in greater detail some animals e.g the camel (p.21), the ibex (p.95) cleric- naturalists (p. 109) etc. There is no cryptozoology in the book, though I was interested to read about the survival of the crocodile to c. 1908 and leopard. The Resources section (pp.301-308) includes nature reserves, parks, Society for Protection of Nature in Israel Field Schools, related sites. Then web sites , bibliography,(pp. 309-311) species names (pp. 313-322 and a comprehensive index (pp. 323-340).

**BioFortean Notes 2** Chad Arment, ed. Pennsylvania: Coachwhip Publications 2011 ISBN 1-61646-109-8 This is a worthy successor to volume 1 and contains the following- The Broad River Sea Serpent, John Hairr Probing The 1896 St. Augustine Carcass, Nelson Jecas and Renee Fratpietro, Irish Snakes , Wild Cats and Other Mystery Animals Richard Muirhead , Sonoran Sasquatch ? , Alton Higgins, The Historical Bigfoot: A Supplement, Chad Arment. Most of these are highly reliant on newspaper reports, but that is no bad thing. Jecas and Fratpietro's account is somewhat technical when it comes to the tissue sampling accounts. Arment's supplement is highly detailed.





# Letters to Flying Snake



My cousin Daniel Kenning wrote this letter to me in response to my interest in cryptozoology.

Dear Cous,

I was thinking slightly differently-about different levels of existence inside human consciousness. For example, cats are in my consciousness and I believe they exist because I've seen them and touched them. I believe Koalas exist because I've seen photos and movies and read stuff about them, but I have no personal evidence. I have no personal evidence of the Loch Ness monster, but I've heard stories both that it does and it doesn't exist. I've never seen a were wolf, and I've only heard what I believe are made-up stories about them. I've not seen a flying reindeer, and I'm comfortable in my belief that this is a made-up animal. So there are lots of shades of consciousness or belief about an animal between "exists" and "doesn't exist", as I'm sure you and your colleagues debate that often.

I was thinking about what makes humans define the "existence" of things, and there is an element of us projecting ourselves on our surroundings to make things exist-I don't mean humans imagining things like Puss-in-Boots or the Frog Prince, Shrek or Dumbo (which we know are made up, and I expect those don't count in cryptozoological terms.)

Beyond existences that can be easily proved by science, like cows- although I'm no scientist so I don't know how you'd prove the existence of cows empirically- my question is "what makes a Loch Ness Monster or Yeti come to sit there within a human consciousness?"



I don't mean "can they be proven to exist?" ,or "is there material proof?" but even before there's any proof ,if we take "exist" to mean "to be within human consciousness", then is there a range of reasons why humans are conscious of animals ?

For example, the Loch Ness Monster may owe its own particular level "existence" in our consciousness to a few sightings, but dragons may "exist" because ancient humans needed an explanation for dinosaur bones. Another animal may exist because of innate fear (maybe of former predators of humans like wolves). Others may exist because of human emotions - perhaps ghosts due to reluctance to let loved ones go when they die?

I was just enjoying some rambling thoughts as a diversion from work and stress, I hope you don't mind. Actually the same thinking could be directed towards the (what I think is called) anthropomorphism in religion, to explain why the abstract and un-understandable entity that we call God is drawn like a human, because we humans can't actually cope with concepts like "God is good but we can't fathom appearance", so we decide that He's a he, and looks like a nice friendly father figure because we can cope with that concept."

In mid January 2012 I sent a copies of Flying Snake 1 and 2 to Sir David Attenborough and I asked him about the likelihood of any unknown species of animal in Madagascar. He gracefully replied in a hand written letter and part of it went as follows:

Dear Richard Muirhead

"In reply to your letter - Madagascar is still under-researched so there are doubtless many more species still to be discovered..."

So I find that very encouraging.

In late March I wrote another letter to Sir David querying why some crabs could be found so far inland. He replied (in a typed letter this time)



Dear Richard Muirhead,

“Thank you for your letter.

There is nothing strange about finding crabs in the Madagascar forest-or indeed in Kerala. Land crabs are common creatures throughout the tropics and belong to several different genera. The biggest is the coconut crab which is a pest in coconut plantations - and quite good eating. There are sixteen different species of them on Christmas Island, one of which makes mass migrations to the sea to lay their eggs, a spectacle that has been shown on television.”

Also in March was the rather surreal “non-revelation” of Madagascar’s mystery animals.

A colleague at work in Oxfam gave me a copy of the Saturday Telegraph Magazine for February 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 with a long essay in it on the fauna of Madagascar. I somehow came up with the thought that the author, Richard Grant was the same person as the famous actor Richard E. Grant. So I tracked down Richard E. Grant’s agent’s address on the Web naively believing I had the right Richard Grant. I had not! About one week later I received a recorded message my phone, from Richard E. Grant, politely stating the fact that he knew nothing about Madagascar’s cryptid fauna as he never wrote the article in the first place!

Now I have done some daft things in my time but this has to be amongst the daftest! Say I’d presumed a “B.Obama” was you know who and I’d got a message on my phone from Barack Obama President of the U.S.A. saying there were no living mammoths in Colorado? Way-hey!

On October 10th 2011 Richard George wrote to me as follows:

“ The cryptozoology music connection is interesting. You probably know that a band called the Flying Lizards had a hit single in 1979 with a quirky version of the old standard Money. I owned a copy when I was thirteen.”





# *The Steampunk Naturalist*

*Mad Science and Natural History, Victorian Style*

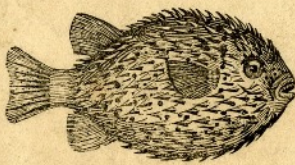


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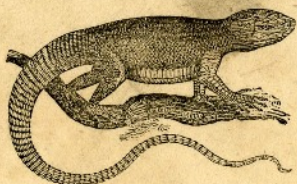




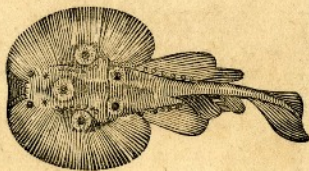
The Rattle-Snake.



The Sea-Orb



The Green Lizard.



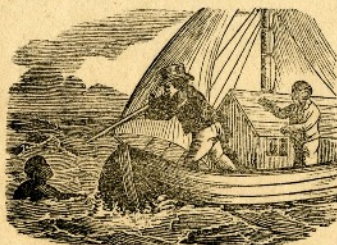
The Torpedo.



Man and Ass.



Hares.



Robinson Crusoe shooting at Muley.



Black Dwarf and the ladies.

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